

UPSTAIRS BULLETIN

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EVERY STAGE OF LIFE has its own characteristics; boys are feeble, youths in their prime are aggressive, middle-aged men are dignified, old people are mature. Each of these qualities is ordained by nature for harvesting in due season.

-Cicero -

Horst Koegler announces Frankfort's JOHN NEUMEIER will do a new "Firebird" and a ballet to Moogsynthesized Bach (whatever that is) when he takes over that company after the present tour with the Stuttgart Ballet. Both JOHN and the school received great coverage in the newspapers here for this season of ballet. It was great seeing this beautiful company and when the year is over it will no doubt be the high of the year. Their performance was like a breath of fresh air in this tired and long suffering ballet world. NAOMI SORKIN will appear prominently in a new ballet by Ian Hovath on December 10th at the Brooklyn Academy of Music with Ballet Theatre. The music, Brahms Viola Quintet will be played by The FINE ARTS QUARTET. MARGARET & TONY MASULLO (YELAGIC) are on tour in the Orient for six months and will play Singapore, Djakarta, Bangkok, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Kyoto and Osaka. JEAN KULAK recently married to Jerry Tourville is honeymooning in Europe. KAREN KRYCH has joined the teaching staff of Christine Neubert's School in New York. There have been changes in the FIETS CHAMBER QUARTET with BILL CARTER & LOIS BEWLEY withdrawing from the group. LISA BRADLEY & MICHAEL UTHOFF are replacing them. We hope that it does not change the kind of performances the group has done in the past. Hardly a Dance Magazine without mention of KATHY POSIN who must be a very busy girl. KELLY BROWN has a new studio in Phoenix built especially for their school - which is known as THE PHOENIX SCHOOL OF BALLET. In conjunction with the Ballet West, formerly the Utah Civic Ballet, they will be doing a full length Nutcracker in December. Here at home we

Chicago, Illinois An Educational Group we have been spared until they announced that The Pennsylvania Ballet would do a few performances. ALICE BRIN contemplating the differences and similarities between Sheidt and Schutz is back at school. Last Summer she sang in the Grant Park concerts. NANCY McCLOUD opens in Chicago on December 25th with a road show called "Disney on Parade". She is now in Hollywood rehearsing and the group will tour the U.S. and Canada for six months. LOUISE AUSTIN had a baby boy on October 22nd - imagine what a spoiled boy he will be with all those sisters. We are all awaiting the visit of JULIE BICKING in November - who is now married and living in Albany, New York. WILLIAM REILLY & LUPE SERANO have taped the Pas de Deux from Nutcracker for a TV show to be shown on Channel 4 on December 26th with the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra. BARBARA STEELE is appearing in "Autumn Garden" given by the Old Town Players. Our old friend GERTRUDE SALTNER has a lead part and FRANK CARIOTI (once in the school) is the director. TRUMAN FINNEY is now the Premier Danseur of the Cologne Opera Ballet. We were very grateful and happy to have two long visits with JOHN NEUMEIER on his short visit here. The next year is to be a crucial one for him but he is so well endowed with talent and likeableness that he should enjoy smooth sailing. He spoke of having engaged ROBERTA SENN for the Frankfort company. She will be remembered as one of the girls in Mr. Stones "L'Inconnue". At this time space prevent me from saying too much about our Milwaukee engagement on December 7th at the Alverno Girl's College. The chief novelty will be BILL REILLY dancing the role of DR Eli Duffy for the first time. He was the first roustabout in 1944 and at that time could walk under my arm - now I can walk under his arm. He will also partner RUTH ANN KOESUN in excerpts from "La Sylphides". To remind you subscriptions are due for Volume 10.

At the still point of the turning world,
neither flesh nor fleshless;
Neither from nor towards; at the still
point, there the dance is.

- T. S. Eliot -

THE DANCE is purely an art of the moment; now you see it, now you do not. Leading up to this moment there is all the thought, preparation and the creation by the choreographer and the performer, then, 'THE MOMENT', is photographed in the mind of the spectator. That moment, 'THE STILL POINT', is never to be seen exactly the same again. Even with the most experienced photographer, something of the personality of the performer is never recorded. It is this 'SOMETHING' that one sees during that 'MOMENT' that makes the theatre a glorious place to be. True, everyone does not see the same thing even at the same time. Photographs, art work and engravings give us an idea of the appearance of a dancer of the past, some vague idea of his style, the costumes and character but the really important thing is somewhere in between the movement quality and the thought projection of the artist - at that 'MOMENT'! Just as the sound of music appeals to the ear, so in the same way movement and personality appeals to the eye of the spectator. With this in mind one can realize what the teacher is up against in trying to tell a group of youngsters about famous artists he has seen in the past; especially, when the student has seen these performers long past their prime.

Viewing dance programs for 50 years will affect one's judgement and taste. Our resultant taste is formed in this way and ghosts will appear in our landscape of memories at every performance we attend, inviting comparisons. So it is inevitable and understandable that the experienced viewer will find much in present day art that is sterile, ordinary and amphigoric; the same old ideas and techniques repeated and rehashed with no freshness or sensibility.

The easily deceived public will acquiesce to and accept some of the most absurd rushes of publicity; never stopping to think that publicity is bought to sell something you may not want. A highly publicized 'genius' may say that choreography need not say anything, that it should just be an abstract manipulation of human bodies. This influences the unschooled public to like what they are seeing because there is nothing to understand. Most amateurs are afraid to admit that they do not know, or, that possibly their taste might not be good. So this relieves them of the strain of thinking and of being wrong.

I was recently pleased to read that the director of the famous Balet Praha, Pavel Smok, say that "Art MUST say something". Unfortunately he is not one who will be read or get too much publicity because he works in Prague. He is occasionally seen in foreign TV broadcasts.

When I review all I have seen in dance over these many years it has been the dances and ballets that have had something to say that I remember. I can enjoy an abstract ballet for the moment I am seeing it but after the "STILL POINT" I retain nothing, nor does anyone else, really.

Drawn from my treasury of favorite moments in dance I cannot think of any of the following dances to this day without a feeling of excitement. Some I only saw once, others many times and always the same rush of emotion upon viewing them. Of all of these only one was comic and that was not without its pathos. The following, I would say are my favorites of all time -

MARY WIGMAN'S "Summer Dance", no frothy idyll, no elfin leaping over green lawns; it was a sensuous narcissistic languor of a female earth that has produced well.

HAROLD KREUTZBERG & YVONNE GEORGI'S "Persian Song" a beautiful, tender and architecturally constructed dance with all the elements of a beautiful love song.

HAROLD KREUTZBERG'S "In Old Vienna" a delightful bit of reminiscing of a happy life in romantic Vienna. Danced with a chair and a jaunty tyrolienne hat.

MARTHA GRAHAM'S "Cave of the Heart" was her dramatization of the Media legend with a stunning and unforgettable set by Isamu Noguchi. This was a role of volcanic proportion for Graham and it was as beautiful as it was terrifying.

RUTH PAGE & BENTLEY STONE'S "LIEBESTOD" danced to the Liszt piano arrangement of Wagner's beautiful Love Death music from "Tristan and Isolde". This wonderful dance poem expressed completely the mood and emotions of Wagner's tragedy.

LEONIDE MASSINE'S "Strange Sarabande" using the idea of Pieter Bruegel's painting "The Blind" was one of the unrecognized masterpieces of the 40's. Seven blind people, while in contact with each other they were happy; losing contact, their world went into confusion.

KIKUNOJO ONEO'S sensitive performance in "Memories" in the Kabucki tour of 1954 was a high point of that year. In a dream his dead sweetheart came to him with a message that upon awakening he could not answer. The dance told his memories of their meeting, love affair and its ultimate tragic end in exquisite pantomime and dance.

No choreographer was named on the programs for that wonderful bit of character art "New Boots" danced by four men in the Ukrainian Dance Company. One pair of new boots to be shared by four men - one whose feet were too big - another whose feet were too small - one whose feet fit the boots perfectly - and the fourth who burst the boots on his first step. For sheer movement interpretation this dance was high art as far as I was concerned; and the critics said what they needed was choreography - BOLSHOI!

BENTLEY STONE'S interpretation of a punch drunk fighter in a dance by that name "Punch Drunk". This was a wonderful theatrical dance with strong overtones of pathos for this affliction of a determined fighter.

Of the many dances I saw of AGNA ENTERS, the one that stands out most in my memory is the "Boy Cardinal". A biting satire which at the end the Cardinal exposes castanets with an arrogant air as if to say "So What!"

For sheer animal excitement in dance few dancers ever reached the height SHANTIA RAO did in her long dance "The Dance of the Enchantress". So personable and intriguing was she that she could have gone on for twice the time and no one would have been bored.

My taste in many ways reflects my training in dance under four great teachers. ADOLPH BOLM, VESCHLAV SWOBODA, LAURENT NOVIKOFF and MICHAEL FOKINE. Now that they are all living in history I still feel their influence and hear discussions of my student days with them. All four had the finest in classical training in Russian schools and almost everything that I danced in under them was character or dramatic work. Their class work gave excellent classical work based on their Masters, so, I did get a feel and appreciation for classical work although I feel it rarely reaches an art level. In a few instances such as the "Pas de Quatre" performance in 1948 with MIA SLAVENSKA as Grisi, ALICIA MARKOVA as Taglioni, NATALIE KRASSOVSKA as Grähn, and ALEXANDRA DANILOVA as Cerito was a great artistic experience. MARKOVA at one time reached this point in "La Sylphide" and in "Giselle". Although in my mind ALICIA ALONZO was greater. ALONZO was the only artist dancing that role who brought tears to my eyes and made me forget that banal music of Adams. I regret never having had the opportunity of seeing GALINA ULANOVA on stage in the role because I found her movie excellent. I do admire the classical work of IRINA KOLPLAKOVA and YURI SOLOVYOV but do not

feel the ballets I've seen them in worthy of their talents. KIRSTEN SIMONE is a favorite of mine but I prefer her in the dramatic roles such as "Miss Julie" and "Carmen".

I never could tolerate the trivial music of the 'Big' ballets, namely, "Nutcracker", "Sleeping Beauty", "Giselle", "Coppelia" or "Sylvia". All their scores are so padded with music for the kindergarten mind. To fill out an evening so much is inserted that the continuity of the story is lost in each act. I much prefer the more compact one act ballets that tells its story clearly and dramatically.

I could name many of Martha Graham's ballets as a favorite but two stand out like jewels, they were "Primitive Mysteries" (1931) and "Letter to the World" (1940). Both were memorable moments for me in the theatre, meaningful, poetic and stimulating to the imagination. In a very different way "Frankie and Johnny" (1938) when Ruth Page and Bentley Stone presented it at the Federal Theatre was powerful use of American folk material, typifying that American talent for tragic-comedy. Leonide Massine's ballets have not been presented well for many years. They need stronger personalities than exist among our dancers today. For sheer enjoyment it was difficult to beat "Beau Danube" (1933) or "Gaité Parisienne" (1938) as ballets. Grateful, I will always be for having grown up artistically during the Massine period. Anthony Tudor's ballets also needed unique talents and were great when performed in the 40's by Nora Kaye and Hugh Lang. "Pilar of Fire" (1942) was without doubt his greatest and I always had a weakness for his "Dark Elegies" (1940). His sensitive and meaningful use of great music was extremely satisfying. I have seen Birgit Cullberg's "Miss Julie" with different casts and always find it completely absorbing. I feel she is a master at finding the right quality of movement, for either group or the soloists, to express what she wants to say. Another ballet that is superb for expressive movement was Rudi van Dantzig's "Monument for a Dead Boy".

Of all the late modern works this ballet far outshines all others. There have been other ballets in the past that I have enjoyed but with nothing remaining to savour. The above eight ballets were high points in the theatre and properly cast and directed would be as great today.

The success of any ballet depends largely on who the performers are and if they possess that quality that gives an audience something very special to carry away in their memory. Written in gold letters in my memory are the names of ANNA PAVLOWA, ALEXANDRA DANILOVA, LEONIDE MASSINE, LEON WOIZIKOWKI, UDAY SHANKAR, LA ARGENTINA, ARGENTINITA, TRUDY SCHOOP, HAROLD KREUTZBERG, MARTHA GRAHAM, ANGNA ENTERS, ALICIA ALONZO, CARMALITA MARACCI, SHANTA RAO, and LOUISILIO. They are among the great dance performers of all time and few have come up to replace them.

All of these pleasant and rewarding moments in the theatre I cannot share with my pupils unless they are receptive. Unfortunately, youth so often, today, is defiant, unbelieving and patient non-listeners about accepting anything from the past. Those who are intelligent and above average will accept some things from the past and add what they have to say (with taste and intelligence) for there is no progress without the knowledge and traditions of the past. I for one am committed to the fact that the ancient Greeks and Persians had us outclassed - we just think we know more.